

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 514

By Gresham

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Dr. E. Claude Gardner of Henderson.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of E. Claude Gardner; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gardner was a Godly man who lived by Christian principles; a professional of vision committed to excellence, he ably served Freed-Hardeman University for more than four decades, two of which were spent as the University's president; and

WHEREAS, as president of Freed-Hardeman University, Dr. Gardner made an indelible mark on the institution and on the lives of the students under his charge; he led with authority and compassion, enriching the lives of as many students as he could because, in his words, it was "the right thing to do"; and

WHEREAS, E. Claude Gardner was born January 16, 1925, the son of O.A. and Edna Gardner; and

WHEREAS, after graduating as the valedictorian of his high school class in Marmaduke, Arkansas, Dr. Gardner went on to earn a degree in Bible from what was then Freed-Hardeman College in 1944; the following year, he married Delorese Tatum, whom he had met in Chapel Hall when both were students at Freed-Hardeman; and

WHEREAS, in 1946, E. Claude Gardner graduated with honors from Abilene Christian College; after receiving a master's degree from Southwest Texas University, he began his teaching career in 1948 in the Rosiclare, Illinois, public school system; and

WHEREAS, in 1949, N.B. Hardeman, co-founder of the institution that bears his name, hired Dr. Gardner to head the Department of Education and Psychology and to teach Bible at

Freed-Hardeman College; Dr. Gardner's return to his alma mater and to Chester County proved auspicious for both entities, as he was an intrepid force of positive change throughout the campus and the community; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gardner moved into administration in 1950, when he assumed the duties of registrar in addition to his teaching responsibilities; he became dean of the college in 1956 and remained dean-registrar until 1969, when he was named the college's vice president. He became president of the college in 1969; and

WHEREAS, during his distinguished presidency, E. Claude Gardner was a student-oriented administrator who sponsored several campus organizations and promoted theater, speech, and music programs as well as academic and honors clubs; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gardner was known for his uncanny ability to recall the name of everyone on campus, often along with his or her hometown; this served as one more testament to his abiding compassion and deep commitment to serving all the students at his beloved institution; and

WHEREAS, through successful fundraising, Dr. Gardner was able to expand all phases of the college, resulting in a status change from junior college to senior college in 1976; then, in 1990, the institution gained university status with its offering of master's degrees in teacher education and ministry. In addition to increasing degree offerings, the campus of Freed-Hardeman increased in size under Dr. Gardner's tenure as well, with more than a dozen buildings constructed under his watch; and

WHEREAS, from 1990-1992, E. Claude Gardner served Freed-Hardeman University as Chancellor, retiring thereafter to become president emeritus; during his illustrious service to the University, he was duly recognized with five honorary doctorates; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gardner was also active in the community, serving as founder of the Chester County Senior Citizens Group, the Chester County Chamber of Commerce, and the Chester County Crime-Stoppers; he also served on the Board of Directors of the Chester County Bank; and

WHEREAS, a man of unwavering faith, Dr. Gardner began preaching at age fifteen, influenced by his parents and Elza Huffard; during his lifetime, he preached for several congregations in the United States and abroad. He conducted 375 gospel meetings, wrote 500 articles for religious publications, and authored eight books as part of his ministry; and

WHEREAS, E. Claude Gardner was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gardner was the beloved patriarch of his family, and his memory will live on with his children, Phyllis (Sam) Hester, Becky (Larry) Cyr, Claudia (Steve Kubik) Goodson, and David (Pat) Gardner; grandchildren, Kristen (Jeremy) Hicks, Beth (Julio) Rivas, Adam (Tosha) Cyr, Nick (Cait) Gardner, Bennett (fiancée Julie) Gardner, and Madison Gardner; and great-grandchildren, Tucker Cyr, Breanne Gardner, and Tessa Moore; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his parents, Dr. Gardner was preceded in death by his wife of fifty-six years, Delorese Gardner, and his second wife, Glenda Jacobs Gardner, as well as his brothers, Stanley, Don, and Albert, and sister, Ethel Jordan; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gardner leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Dr. E. Claude Gardner, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Dr. Gardner.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.